

Dear (to all his MSPs)

As a keen cyclist, who has often used trains as part of my journeys round Scotland, I am writing to you to ask the transport minister to oppose plans to cut cycle carriage capacity drastically (by 50% and more) on two of Scotland's key routes for bike/rail travel.

The internal layouts planned for the CI 385 trains on the Edinburgh-Glasgow main line, and refurbished CI 158 trains on the West Highland Line, are seriously detrimental to bike/rail travel and contradictory to the Scottish Government's ambition for a big rise in bike use for commuting, leisure and tourism. This unexpected and extremely worrying backward step seems to run parallel with a retreat by Transport Scotland from its former relatively positive attitude to bike/rail development.

I do of course appreciate that Abellio wish to encourage travel to and from stations by bike, are enhancing bike parking at many stations and introducing bike hire at a limited number, plans which I very much support. However, given that bike hire is only likely to be available at perhaps 15-20 stations, this does not cater for many existing and potential bike/rail trips, nor for those people who have other reasons for needing to take their own bike.

The Franchise commitment drawn up by Transport Scotland was for a minimum of 2 bike spaces per train, but it would now appear that Transport Scotland is turning this into a maximum – commencing with some of Scotland's most significant bike/rail routes. Furthermore, rather than even retaining the current levels of bike capacity, this represents truly drastic cutbacks, as outlined below.

At the same time, I am astonished and shocked to discover that Transport Scotland has said it will no longer attend the national bike/rail forum, which is held 4 times each year to discuss bike/rail issues and developments, with the ScotRail Alliance and cycling interests present.

It would appear that Transport Scotland is rapidly retreating from its generally positive role at the time of the exciting and widely praised franchise bid document and the subsequent ScotRail Cycle Action Plan. As an agency of a Scottish Government which has ambitious cycling aims, this is most concerning.

#### **West Highland Line services from Glasgow to Oban and Fort William – 66% cut**

- Currently six bikes can be booked onto the CI 156 trains and these places are heavily subscribed. The refurbished CI 158 trains are proposed to have only two reservable bike spaces. Even a small family of 2 adults and one child could not be guaranteed space.
- Cycle tourism is an important contributor to the Scottish economy and the slashing of this provision will have an adverse effect on the income of many small local businesses. National Cycle Route 1 (a route which goes from the top of Shetland to Dover) goes through your constituency. These businesses will be astonished by this lack of care for their well being once they become aware of Transport Scotland's intentions, as well as a loss of long distance ticket revenue to ScotRail.
- With more ambition on the part of Transport Scotland, instead of this being a threatened capacity loss on the West Highland Line, maintaining the standard of 6 bookable cycle spaces per train would have the beneficial side effect of increasing capacity on the Far North Lines from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh and Wick/Thurso, areas where cycle tourism is equally valuable.
- Astonishingly, there was no stakeholder consultation on the design for these trains. What was the role of Transport Scotland in this decision?

#### **Edinburgh Glasgow via Falkirk mainline – 50% cut**

- Despite train length being increased from 3-coach to 4-coach, cycle carrying capacity is being cut from 4 to 2 bikes, with bike areas reduced from 2 to 1.
- The one remaining cycle storage area will have fold-up seats, potentially reducing availability, and causing irritation to seated passengers if a bike gets on subsequently. The existing trains have no fold-down seats in one of the two bike areas..
- With only one bike area in a 4-coach train, loading times will suffer as compared to 2 bike areas on a 3-coach train, on this route where loading times are of the essence to punctuality.
- Although there is also a 'flexible space' on the train, this is too short to easily accommodate a normal adult bike.
- All these issues were raised during the earlier CI 385 stakeholder consultation – notably the need for enhanced flexible space, to cater for all types of luggage as well as bikes. I am astonished that the outcome is a 50% cut in bike capacity, a lower standard of provision because of the fold-up seats and a likelihood of increased loading times.

I urge you, as my MSP to intervene in these decisions - to at least retain existing levels of bike capacity on all these services, and to ensure that Transport Scotland returns to the BikeRail Forum and to playing a positive and constructive role in bike/rail development in Scotland.

Yours sincerely